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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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

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GOOD AGENTS WANTED.

THE DIVINE LOVE.

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."—John xiii. 1.

If this person Jesus were a man only, still on all hands, as much by those who disbelieve as by those who have the most faith, is he regarded as the greatest moral genius which the world ever saw. There be many who will not worship him as divine, but who revere him as the consummate image of a true manhood.

Even if you should rank yourself in this genus, I should desire, in the views which I shall open in this passage, to carry you along with me, inasmuch as the inferences and deductions which are to spring from it all have a certain degree of force even with those who take no higher estimate of Jesus than that he was the greatest of human beings; but to us who believe that he is divine, that he is the express image of the Father, and that God so loved the world that he sent his Son to die for it, the inferences which are to be deduced from it will come with greater emphasis and power; for now all the elements of mind which were evolved by him are interpreted into so many divine elements; and it is not simply what Jesus said or did, but that his saying and doing interpret to us what the Father says and does, that is important; and we come through faith in Jesus to a knowledge of that greater moral government which obtains in heaven and upon earth, and throughout the whole domain of God.

It was a moment of full divine consciousness of which John speaks. There can be no question that the consciousness of divinity was intermittent in our Saviour; that a part of his humiliation consisted in the relative obscurity of his mind; that though divine, he was in eclipse; and that, up to the latest period of his life, there were moments and occasional hours, when he rose into the fullest consciousness of divinity.

This was certainly one of those hours. He had come to the last days. Just before him was the scene of his passion, and beyond that the scene of his crucifixion. He was about to return to his Father. Knowing that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own, "he loved them unto the end."

There lies latent in this declaration a world of meaning and comfort and encouragement. It is not strange that one leaving should find in the hour of his departure all his affections touched and quickened. When the child leaves his father's house to go out into the world, the father and mother seem more dear and venerable to him than ever before. A thousand things which had lain dormant hitherto spring up and gush forth; it is an hour of intense quickened affection when the child leaves home to go among strangers; and it would not be strange, if this world were the Saviour's home, and if those around about him were to him as our brothers and sisters and parents are to us, that in this last moment, when he was about to separate from them, he should have felt a deeper and stronger impulse than at any previous time.

On the other hand, when, for purposes of health or pleasure or business, one has long been an exile, dwelling in a torrid clime, or in European capitals, and at last the day comes in which he is to set his face homeward, although he has made pleasant acquaintances, and though it may be that here and there he has given out heart-love, yet when once he thinks of his fatherland, of his childhood home, of his father and mother, and of his brothers and sisters who are there, the impulse, the outgo of affection, is such as to make everything seem shadowy where he has been an exile. Leav-

ing scenes that are strange to go back to old familiar scenes, his heart overleaps land and sea, and he rejoices with exceeding great joy to break all the ties which have been formed during his residence abroad.

Applying this, if Jesus had known no other life, and no other friends than these, we should not have been surprised that the latest feelings of affection toward his earthly friends should have been the strongest; but if, as it is declared, he was about to go out of this world into which he had come, and return to his Father, and his heavenly home, it is different. Who can imagine the vision that arose before him in that hour? Who can conceive of divine life at any rate? Who can bring before the mind, by the utmost stretch of the imagination, with any degree of richness or vividness, what that life must be whose outplay afar off we see in the choicest and best things upon the earth? If this is the footstool, what is the throne? Of the companionship, the nobility, the liberty, the ineffable power that exist in the spiritual sphere, we in the flesh have no knowledge. No man can define them. No man can paint them for himself. The grandeur of the conception of the other life which doubtless arose before the Saviour, was the immortality of his nature. The infinitude of his power was to be restored. There was the eternal Father. There were all the companionships which he had known from eternity. He was to go back to these glories; and it was in the hour of the consciousness of his divinity returning to immortality, that it is declared that, "having loved his own *which were in the world*, he loved them unto the end."

Now, this is wonderful; for consider the real nature and substance of these disciples. If Christ was divine, if he had dwelt in all the accomplishments of the heavenly land, if he had known being as it is developed there in infinite variety and in various perfection, what must the disciples have seemed to him? Consider that of the twelve there was not a single one that we should mark as a person of any extraordinary endowment, unless it was John. Consider that with the exception of three—Peter, James, and John—there were none that left any memorial or any record besides their

names. Consider that these men were not only without genius but without culture, and without the experience of the human race at large. They were mostly laboring men—not only men from the humble walks of life, but men who matched the conditions in which they were reared. They were no greater than their surrounding circumstances. Men they were who had not in them one single quality that should make them heroes, aside from the qualities that should make anybody a hero.

If the Saviour had made selection of men like Martin Luther, like Philip Melancthon, like Hampden, like Philip Sidney, like Washington; or, if he had selected men of genius, represented in the literary spheres by the highest eminence, like Dante, or Shakespeare, or Goethe, we can imagine how, surrounded by such a band of the greatest natures that the earth had ever produced, there might have been an effect produced upon his affection and upon his feeling that should have made him sorry to part from them; but these were the plainest of men, with no royalty of endowment such as we speak of under the name of genius. Nay, there was very little which his residence among them had done for them, up to this time. He had not rooted out from them their pride. He had not extracted their selfishness. He had not melted the hardness of their hearts. He had not quenched the fire of a cruel zeal which was in them. One is surprised to see how little they had loved, and how little they were changed during his long tarrying with them. They were selfish. They were full of prejudices. They had ambition. They had also its cut-throat meanness. In the passage which I read to you in the opening service it is shown how they were attempting to circumvent each other. Slyly stealing to his ear, through the mediation of their mother, the two brothers undertook to outstrip all the other disciples, who, when they heard of it, were enraged at these two men for undertaking to get the highest places in the coming kingdom. As Christ was journeying with some of his disciples, when they came to a Samaritan village, John asked permission to burn up the inhabitants. A sweet-minded gospel that! And it was rebuked by the Saviour, who said, “Ye

know not what spirit ye are of." And just before him lay the fatal defection and cowardice and treachery of Peter.

Such were the men who were round about Christ. He knew what they were. He understood their caliber. He was not ignorant of their mental and moral size. And it is of these men that it is said, "Having loved them [and having lived with them till he found them out, and knew them altogether] he loved them unto the end." He was conscious of a distinct, strong affection toward them; and he took them with all their limitations and imperfections and miserable passions, and lifted them up against the background of the eternal world, and of his Father in the kingdom of glory. Holding these poor, common, vulgar men up against the noblest conceptions of being, he still loved them.

Now, if he was but a man, this is royal; but if he was divine, it is something more than royal. There is an interpretation in it which goes far into the depths of moral government.

It is very plain, then, that divine love includes in it elements other than those which are usually imagined. It is not strange that God loves loveliness. We do that. He must be stolid indeed who, seeing figured before him all that he conceives to be admirable, feels no response; but so unapt, so selfish are we, that having fellow-beings brought before us in order that we may love them, there is in us a lethargy, or moral inertness, such that nature must be stimulated and roused up by exceeding loveliness. There are eyes which are so sensitive to color that you may take the lowest tone in creation, and they rejoice in it; but there are other eyes which are so leathery and so insensitive that it takes the most vivid yellows and the most violent scarlets to wake up in them a sense of color. And as it is in regard to color, so it is in regard to excellence of character. If you take an effulgent nature, transcendently accomplished, fascinating, winning; and if you add personal beauty, that the eye may feast while the mind admires, it would be strange if you did not love; you admire and love that which is admirable and lovely. But suppose a thing is neither admirable nor lovely?

Who of you loves that which is not lovely? Who of you loves a creature that is divested of that which appeals to the reason, to the moral sense and to the esthetic faculties? Can any one love under such circumstances? Can I love that which is hateful? Can I, who believe in humility, love that which is proud? Can I, who believe in generosity, love that which is selfish? Can I, who believe in amiableness, love that which is ugly? Is it in the power of a being to love a thing that is not lovable? Ah! that is the question. There is in a divine nature that which can love beings that are not lovely. God brings out of his own nature to us a capacity to love that does not in any wise whatever stand upon our moral character.

This is not effacing the distinction between approbation, complacency, and displacency; it does not follow that this love is not more gratified with growing excellence in man than without it; but whatever augmentations it may receive, there is in the divine nature power to love where the object itself is not lovable. It is not approbation; it is a sense of parentality. It is that kind of love which every parent knows how to feel toward children who, although they are not ugly, are not in and of themselves attractive.

Take the only unfolding of this mystery that is given to love; take the universal experience of this world—the love which all creatures (insects, reptiles, birds, beasts, and the human kind in their savage state) have for their offspring. In these there is this rudimentary element. There is in them the dawn of this element in its lowest and most limited capacity. Our love for our children, however much it may grow and widen, and however much the imagination may play around about it, is a love which we feel for them by reason of that which is in us, and not by reason of that which is in them. The babe that lies new-born upon the mother's arm has in it neither thought, nor love, nor imagination, nor any power of expression; it is nearer to absolute zero than anything else that can be conceived of; it is almost like the pulpy sunfish that floats upon the sea, gelatinous; it is almost like the downiest down that flies in the air, void and empty of all power; and yet, there is in

the mother that which loves it with an intensity which is like life itself.

The father's pride and love are not the equal of the mother's, and yet they have a strong place in him. Things that are not lovely, if they be our children, find in us a capacity, limited and transient, but real, to love with an intensity which upon occasion will lead us to risk life itself for them.

So we have in ourselves the germ and analogy of this divine power to love things that are not lovely. We have a preparation for it—or, as it may be said, a faculty which leads to it. We are conscious that as our children grow up there is a transition, and that something is conjoined to this. We do not let go of them; by the instinct of parental affection we hold on to them; and as various excellences are developed in them, and they become more companions for us, there are more fibers of our heart that twine around them.

Now, in the great Father of the universe there is a nature that loves universal being, not on account of its perfection, but on account of the feeling that is in God.

Why see, to-day, how all the trees laugh in the sunshine because they are so beautiful! They are not waving one banner. It is the fast-day of the year, and all the trees are clothed in sack-cloth and ashes, as it were; and yet, over them all the sun pours light, and every one of them glistens by reason of the glory which the sun bears to it. Over all the fields of the North, where there is no verdure, but where the surface is brown or snowy white, the sun pours its radiance. And it is not because they are beautiful that he shines upon them: he shines upon them and they become beautiful. The light of the sun illumines those things on which it falls, because the sun has light and warmth in it beforehand. It is on account of this warmth and light that there is beauty and glory in all the earth.

The divine nature is one that does not come feeling and finding its way among men because here and there it perceives eternal excellences: it pours itself out that there may be such excellences. It stimulates and develops them. It goes before all amiableness, all beauty, all attractiveness, and is the cause of their existence and their activity.

In the earlier stages of our lower life we love that which is nothing. We love our children that are at zero. We love them at every step as they unfold and go up, with their mistakes, with their weaknesses, with their wickednesses, with their rudenesses, with their animalism, with their ten thousand little quarrels, with all the things which make them a source of disturbance and distress. Notwithstanding the various cares and pains which they cause us, we still love them, and our love ferments and develops and stimulates and works them up more and more.

That which is true in the family is true in the round world which God has been pleased to create. On the earth he has brought forth, and is bringing forth in constant succession, creatures of the lowest form; and he is guiding and developing them, and raising them up higher and higher. There is no God that is in sympathy with his creatures, if there is not in the divine nature a power of sympathizing with things at the lowest, at the poorest, at the bottom. He is full; he is complete in himself; and he has the capacity of loving, and of pouring love from his own nature upon things high and things low, things good and things bad; and when we are commanded to be perfect, we are commanded to be perfect in the same way that he is. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." How is he perfect? "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That is, he is a nature that sympathizes with simple being, always and everywhere; and we are commanded to have universal sympathy and charity in the same way that he does.

In this simple thought that it is the nature of God to love, to sympathize, to pity, to have compassion—in other words, to send out the affluence of his being personally toward every human creature—we find the world's hope and the world's comfort. You may dismiss from your minds, if you can, all that part of the human race who are not your cousins and brothers and sisters; in your hearts you may roll South America to the devil, and say, "Poor miserable half-breeds! Who cares for them? I don't; they are outside of the true

religion ;” but I cannot dismiss them so. You may take Africa, and say, “It is one vast herd of animals ; and the world would not miss a single thought or sensibility if you were to rub out its inhabitants as so many aphides.” I cannot do that. I cannot get rid of the thought of the millions that swarm throughout the world. I cannot forget that there are ten that know not God consciously where there is one that does ; and as I drink in the spirit of Christ, and come into sympathy with his declaration that “the field is the world,” my thought goes out after some God who thinks for the Jew as well as for the Gentile. I cannot agree with the Pharisee who stood opposing the preaching of God to the Gentiles, and said, “He is our God, the God of our church, the God of the Jews ;” and who stoned those who threatened to go to the Gentiles and preach. I cannot imitate the old Pharisee. It is a burden on my soul, what becomes of the vast multitudes of Africa. Where go the swarming products of human life in Asia ? Where do all the poor go that are at the bottom of our cities, crawling like vermin and worms in and out of the crevices of palaces, and in dens and dungeons in abject poverty ? What becomes of them ? Where do they come from, and where do they go to ? What becomes of those whose education is neglected ? What becomes of the great under-mass of mankind everywhere ? I love the noble and the cultured ; I have the most fastidious sense of the ethical and the æsthetic qualities in society ; I rejoice in all that is resilient and beautiful ; there is in my heart a leaping sensibility to all these things ; but, after all, it is those who are low and degraded that are heaviest on my mind.

Now, if there is any light that is to come, it is that there is a God who has adapted himself to the wants of men, or that the world is adapted to the nature of God, in this : that there is a ruling Spirit in the center of power and wisdom that knows how to love things that are not lovable—that knows how to feel a parental sensibility toward objects that do not address themselves to the moral sense, nor to the sense of beautifulness in the divine character. If there is such an element as this in the divine nature, if this is the rudder of

history, if the ages are steered by a Pilot whose nature is fashioned on this principle, then I can tolerate and I can bear; but if I stand and ask, not what becomes of Presbyterian children, not what becomes of Congregational children, not what becomes of the higher New England villagers that have been trained in the school and in the church, but what becomes of the great myriad, myriad mass of mankind, that have no light, no schools, no priests, no teaching except of theft and violence, and that suck blood from their infancy—if I look out upon my kind and ask this question, my heart yearns for them. Is there nothing for them? Is there only stern justice for them? It brings me back to daylight and hope and faith again to know that the divine nature is one that is so transcendently lifted up that it can do for the universe of creatures which God has created what the parental nature is able to do for the little babes in our families; and the thought becomes a kind of sacred ark of the covenant to me. In this mystery of the mother and the child I can discern the elements of that great moral government which shall effulge more and more gloriously through the ages of time, and through the periods of eternity.

This universality of the divine sympathy interprets the declaration of the Bible, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son to die for it." Not to go into word criticisms, not to spoil the breadth of the fact by minute analysis, the declaration has flamed in the New Testament for ages that the divine feeling of sympathy and yearning toward a world lying in brutality and wickedness was such that he gave that which was most precious to him—his Son—to die for it; and that feeling is a testimony of what is the inspiration of the Center of the universe.

Men may think that this declaration of universal sympathy and affection obliterates the motives to right; but not so. Is there any other feeling stronger in the parent's heart than this: that the child that is loved shall grow out of nothingness and littleness into largeness and beauty? Is there any greater reward to a parent than to see the child do well? And God, blessed be his name, aims at universal righteousness. He aims to exalt human nature; to develop it; to

enlarge it; to enrich it; to purify and cleanse it. Whom he loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.

Take away, now, the narrowness of figures which hinder the bringing out of the thought, and consider that this is the universal tendency: God loves the whole world in their nothingness, and meanness, and poorness; but for the sake of making them stronger and larger and better, he is administering the scheme of ages on that one great line—namely, that of a loving schoolmaster, instructing men in righteousness, love employing the resources of infinite wisdom and power for the glorification of human nature. God loves men without reason in them, but with infinite reason in himself; and he aims by his love to benefit men. His love is not simply good-nature. He is not like a very indulgent schoolmaster, fast asleep, and leaving the school to racket and play. God's love is intensely earnest. It stings. It pierces. It has in it the cramp and power of justice. It has sternness in it. Suffering flows from it. All these things are so many elements by which love is seeking to make the object loved worthy, though in the beginning it is worthless. By the divine nature we are taken up at the beginning and at the bottom. There is nothing that is loveable in us at first; but under the fruitful and fructifying influence of the Divine soul working upon our souls, one germ, and another germ, and another, begin to develop in us something loveable; and the Divine complacency takes hold upon us as we are perfected, and become priests and kings, and rise to higher love and perfection.

I love my babes; but do you think I love them as I do my grown-up children? Who can ever unroll that net which is woven in the silence of loving thoughts in a soul that every day weaves new patterns of love which disappear in the memory? Who can ever, in this life, unroll all a father's and mother's thought of their beloved ones, so that you may see the whole of it? There are no words which can describe that kingdom of love in the human heart whose height and depth and length and breadth can never be descried, through which no poet's wing can fly, which cannot be revealed, and

which belongs essentially to the invisible and unknowable things of this life.

And so God, with a compassion that takes hold at the bottom, at the lowest, at the least, at the poorest, of those that are the most needy, works us up by grace, by administrative justice, by a thousand tendencies, and develops in us a thousand likenesses that correspond to himself; and we shall become more and more distinctly and complacently loved as we develop these qualities. I rejoice that the love of God increases and rises in the scale as we become like him; but I rejoice more that antecedent to all that, before the reason or the moral sense is developed, there is a Divine stimulus that goes through the universe, and teaches the race how from animals to become men, and how from men to become angels. I rejoice that there is an infinite power that works everywhere, and that shall never cease to work till the sun goes empty of light, and the stars forget to shine, and the universe itself is lost—God over all, blessed forever, and forever blessing, and blessing because it is more blessed to give than to receive.

What a great consolation this representation of God presents to those who are weak and imperfect, and who battle with weaknesses and imperfections in themselves! I think there is no sadder sight than the soul-humiliation of men whose ideal is high, but whose performance is low, and who frequently are broken down with a sense of their shortcoming at the judgment-seat of their own moral sense. The obscuration that comes to them because they are so unworthy is sad in the extreme. How many feel so unworthy that they do not dare to pray! How many feel that if they had some accomplishment, some state of mind that they could present as sincere and heaven-reaching, God would love them! But they are sinful and hateful, and they do so much wrong, that they never once think that they have an open vision of acceptance before God; for they have an impression that God loves men on account of holiness. So he does; but only on the ground of holiness? Ah! no, no. There is a better love, there is a sweeter grace, of the divine nature. A man loves you more and more as you rise

higher and higher on the scale, and that you might expect ; but there is a Divine nature that antecedes all condition, and into that men may go as into a summer atmosphere, both to germinate and to grow. It is not probable that any one loves you on earth as God does, or that there is any one on earth whose love is so strong, so rich or so various, as the weakest inflection of the Divine sympathy toward every individual of the human race.

So then, God is our model and ideal of all that is true and just and pure and holy and good. He is the Center of all that is high and noble. He is all-helpful, all-healing, tolerant, forgiving and gracious. No matter how weak men are, God loves the weak. No matter how sinful men are, there is an element in the divine nature that knows how to love them. Not, however, to foster sin, but to heal it; not to indulge weakness or to tolerate it, but to bring it out of weakness into true strength. The bosom of God is the food of the universe. Ye that need, there is no other one to whom you can go as unto God ; such is his nature.

How many are waiting ! How many there are striving to build themselves up ! How many there are who hope that yet all tears, and all prayers, and all mortifications, and all watchings, and all conflicts, and all practical resistance to evil, will at last bring the generations into that state in which they shall be able to come before God and claim the final reward of victory. Never, never, never, never ! The holiest man that ever lived on earth, looked at in the light of God's countenance, is distorted, and disfigured, and as filthy rags. Not a being in this sphere ever reaches to such a state that God can tolerate him on the ground of moral excellence. The ground on which God tolerates men is the nature of God. Not in your own nature, but in the divine nature, the hope of God's redeeming power lies. It is because he is what he is, that we have a ground of hope.

Take a cambric needle. Is there anything finer ? There is no roughness to it. How perfect is its eye ! What an exquisite point it has ! Take a solar microscope. Let me hold the needle so that its image will be thrown by the instrument on a screen, and it looks like one of the ruggedest

of New England fence posts. The point is all jagged and rough. The whole of it, from top to bottom, is full of obliquities. It will never bear being magnified, and having its real nature brought out.

Take the purest and best man, and let him stand and have his shadow cast upon a screen under the light of God's eye. The holiest prophet, the noblest apostle, the most heroic martyr, the purest teacher, the most self-sacrificing and best man—if God loves him, he must love him though he be full of imperfection. It is the nature of God that saves men, and not the excellence that is in them.

So then, let me say to those who are in trouble, and are waiting for the disclosure of God's grace, It is there. It needs no disclosure for you but to believe in it. You have One that has infinite sympathy for you, and infinite relish—strange as it may seem. You have One that is willing, for the sake of his sympathy and love, to bear with you. He has given a token of it by sacrificing his Son. He has made it manifest to human experience in all its various phases. His Word overflows with wondrous expressions of fondness, tenderness, grace, kindness and goodness; and they are addressed, not to men who are perfect, but to men dripping with transgression; to men full of faults and weaknesses. He says to every man, "Come." There is not a man so good that he does not need to come to God as a sinner; and there is not a man so bad that he may not come to God as a sinner. There is room in the heart of God for every human soul; and the hope and inspiration of a better life lies not in your wisdom, not in your power, but in the nature of the divine government, and in the nature of the divine soul. There is a remedy, and there is hope.

Are there those among you who have been traveling in a Christian experience for many years, and who are yet looking back upon your life conscious of how poor it is, and how unfruitful it has been? Do you have at times strange doubts as to whether or not you will be accepted of God?

I think one of the most characteristic and one of the most pathetic experiences of my venerable and dear father took place in his last years. He was brought up under the

most rigorous school of New England Calvinism, and he was always in doubt of his acceptance with God. When he was living here with me in Brooklyn, after several days of retirement and great thoughtfulness, he said: "I have been making a careful examination of my evidences; I have tried to deal with myself just as I would deal with any other person; I have looked it all through, and I have reason to believe that I have a right to trust that my sins have been forgiven, and that I shall be saved." That old hero, who had fought evil and built up good for more than fifty years—more than half a hundred years—in the last years of his life sat down in a grave calculation of himself, to know whether the states of his mind were such that he had reason, in view of his evidences, to believe that he was salvable! The only mistake lay in this: that he came to the conclusion that he was! If he had looked a little deeper, if he had applied a little closer measure, he would have seen that no man living, under the divine law, could say, "My evidences are such that I have a right to hope that I am going to be saved." Everybody, judging himself by that standard, would be obliged to say, "My evidences are as filthy rags. There is nothing in me that is good. I am as grass, in more senses than one. I am as the dust of the field. When I compare myself on any advanced scale with magnitudes, I am nothing; and if there is nothing in God that can save me, there is nothing in me by which I can be saved, and I shall go out as a candle."

If we are to be saved, it will not be because we are good, though we try to be good. It will not be because we are built up so far that God cannot afford to lose us. He might blow us as dust out of the balance, and we should not be missed. But there is in heaven, carrying perpetual summer through the spheres, a divine nature that knows how to love natures that are poor, and how to inspire them by his love with a desire for goodness, as the mother or the father does the child. It is because God loves me that I have hope that I shall live; and I hear sounding from the Word of God and from the heavenly land, this divine and blessed declaration. "Because I live, ye shall live also." My life is hid with

Christ in God. When he who is my life shall appear, then I shall appear also with him.

Trust not in your own goodness, though you seek it. Rest not on your own growth, though you are inspiring it with every attainment and every mistake. Remember that there is summer above your head. As long as God loves there is hope for you. There is hope for you because you are poor and needy. The poorer you are, the more you need God. God is the food of the universe, the bread of life, the water of life, the hope of life, and the reward in the life that is to come.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

OUR Father, thou hast taught us to be bold before thee. Thou hast made thy name dear to us; and we do not know how to tremble before thee as if thou wert a hard master. Thou hast overlaid the tokens of thy power with great gentleness and with great love; and thou hast above all taught us that greatness doth not lie in eminence, nor in the sounding power that moves external things, but in graciousness, and kindness, and self-sacrifice, and the service of universal love. Thou hast so taught us to interpret greatness that we are drawn to it. Yea, we are stronger by the sense of thy strength, and are better by the sense of thy perfect holiness. Even with a knowledge of our weakness and of our wickedness we still draw near to thee, and rejoice that we are filled.

And now we pray, this morning, that thou wilt accept the thanksgiving which we draw near to thee to bring. Not the lowest nor the least sound from the human heart but is sweet in thine ear. The mute endeavor of uninstructed yearning comes up as grateful incense to thee; and how much more dost thou accept intelligent worship! We do worship thee—not thine amazing power; not the fact that thou dost outrun our thought of things universal to the bounds of the infinite, but all that which comes into the soul, and interprets God to our nature and to our want. We rejoice in that; we crown it; we ascribe everlasting praise to it. What thou art we do not know; what the form or figure of the spirit is we know not; what are the conditions of infinite existence in thee—thou that art the source of innumerable forms of life in others—we do not know; but it is enough that the center of thy power and of thy being is infinite wisdom, infinite goodness, infinite beauty, and that those things which are scattered as gold in the rivers around about the stream of creation are but specimens of that which in thee is as the mountain from which these have come.

We rejoice that thou wilt answer every longing for knowledge. Everything that is in mastership of genius; the things that we love in the flow of speech; all that springs from the overflowing heart full of affection and from the iridescence of the imagination; all that which plays in infinite variety in the soul; all that we look upon and call genius among men—these are but forthputtings of thine. They are but sparks from thee that reveal thy nature. They reflect thee even as drops of dew reflect the sun that kindles its light in them.

O Lord, we rejoice that we shall not be disappointed when we see thee as thou art. Now we do not see thee as thou art. We figure to ourselves variously our God, vast, formless, uncertain by reason of our uncertainty of mood and disposition; but when we stand before thee what experience have we, from which we can gather the gladness of that hour in which, when we shall know as we are known, we shall be perfectly satisfied?

We rejoice in the anticipation of the future. We kindle again the extinguished torch. In the disappointments of life we have seen

hope after hope go out. Weariness comes upon endeavor, as satiety comes with enjoyment; and as we rebound from all knowledges with a sense of limitation, and weakness, and unknowingness, we rejoice, looking forward, to believe that it shall not always be so. These are but the beginnings of our life. Now we are being formed and fashioned. The full disclosure of ourselves awaits the other state of existence. There we shall see thee face to face—no longer through a glass, darkly. To that hour we refer all our doubts and all our fears. The majesty of that hour shall indeed dissipate all our doubts and fears, and we shall be satisfied. We shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In that hour when we shall see and know and be more than it hath entered into the heart of man in this world to conceive, we shall find again those who have gone from us. We have carried them forth, and they have passed into darkness; but we shall find them in the light. They have left us with much sorrow, with soreness of heart, and with memories that shall still weep; but they are where tears can never fall. We shall greet and shall be greeted by our friends in a state better than that in which we gave them to thee. Our children shall come again to us, better than they were when we parted from them. Our companions shall be united to us once more, better than they were in the sweetest counsel of the selectest hour of love. We shall find that the branch that was stripped off hath roots of its own, and is bearing blossom and fruit which the clime of earth could not ripen.

How wonderful shall be the added wealth of our being! When we look at the grave with its processions, it seems as though it were sand of the desert on which life poured water that hid itself and brought forth nothing; but beyond this world we shall find how all the things which we planted in death have sprung up in immortality and glory. To this we constantly look forward, and bear our burden, and carry our cross of sorrow and despondency, remeasuring perpetually with the other life measure, and not with the estimate of this life,—seeking to be men according to the pattern of the future.

Vouchsafe to us more and more the interpreting light of thy spirit from which spring all these imaginings, thoughts and hopes of immortality. Grant, we pray thee, to all who are in thy presence this morning, the selectest memories of blessings in the past; and grant that there may be opened in us in the future memories of other and richer blessings. Grant that there may come peace to hearts that are disturbed. Give relief to those who are tempest-tossed and not comforted. May they have a sense of reconciliation who have been in offense with thee, who have violated thy laws, and who are reaping the bitter fruit of transgression. Grant that there may come a sense of our impurity on the one side, and a sense of the magnitude of our being on the other. Grant that we may be made small with a sense of time-greatness, and large with a sense of the greatness which belongs to us because we are sons of God.

We pray that this day thou wilt temper the souls of thy people to communion with thee, and so to fellowship with each other. May everything that is selfish and proud, and everything that is impure, be taken away from us; and may we have the clear shining light of

the heavenly life in us to-day, and rejoice in each other, and rejoice in Jesus, our common Head. May we forgive one another, as we hope to be forgiven. Help us to bear their infirmities, as God bears our infirmities. Help us to study the things which make for peace one with another. Grant that we may have more and more that self-denying love by which we shall carry others' sufferings rather than inflict suffering upon them.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt give us the blessing of the year. Gather together all the influences of the year that is speeding itself, that they may rest upon us. Give us presage and foretoken of the blessings of the year that is to come, and that is hastening to dawn. We pray that there may be more and more in this people, among all that are here gathered together to worship God, and to express their gladness in him by their good will, and kindness toward their fellow-men.

We pray that thou wilt bless this church, and that thou wilt grant that all its experiences may work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Bless, we pray thee, all the churches of this city, and all thy servants that are appointed to prophesy and teach therein. May they be inspired of God, and so set free from earthly faults and earthly hindrances as that they may more perfectly make known to men, both by their lives and their doctrines, what is the nature and purpose of the truths of Jesus Christ.

We pray that thou wilt bless our whole land. Bless the President of these United States. Bless the Congress assembled, and all that administer justice. Bless the legislatures of the several States. Bless all judges and magistrates, and the great body of citizens. May they be God-fearing and law-abiding. May knowledge prevail throughout this great land, driving away prejudice, and superstition, and darkness. May intelligence be joined to virtue, and virtue to piety, so that men may live together with ampler rights here, and with the hope of a nobler life beyond this world.

We pray that thou wilt bless, not our land alone, but all the nations upon the globe. We rejoice that thou art overturning and overturning, inasmuch as behind the plow goes the sower, and sows seed where the turf hath been laid over. There hath been destruction of old things, but better ones shall come. Thou that goest forth to sow among the nations, plow and harrow the land, that the good seed sown may spring up and bring forth fruit of truth and justice, and kindness and charity.

Grant that intelligence may prevail everywhere. Pity all those nations that yet sit in darkness. Bring upon them spring and summer, that they may grow. Lift upon this world the light of thy countenance. Stretch forth thine all-inspiring nature, thou God of omnipotence, and roll the ages fast, that have walked so slow. O bring to pass the promised prediction! Bring to pass those things which now are to be dimly described, moving toward accomplishment. Grant that from the East to the West, and from the North to the South, all the blessedness of a regenerated manhood may begin to be perceived. Let the day hasten when the glory of the Lord shall ripen the whole earth and all men shall see thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT unto us, our Father, an enlarged conception of thy nature and of thy power. Grant that we may lift ourselves up into a consciousness of the sympathy of God for us, that we may take comfort in it. Now we are as those that shiver in dungeons though the sun pours summer all over the land. Bring us out of our caves and hiding places of fear and remorse. Bring us out of all those shivering regions where we have been driven. Bring us into a consciousness of that nature in us that fits thy sympathetic nature. May we realize thy love toward us, and may we rejoice in it.

Grant, we pray thee, that all who are in thy presence may have a sense of what treasure there is for them, how much they are thought of, how much they are beloved, how wonderfully they are lifted up, and how continually and unconsciously they are ministered to by all good things about them. O grant that the touches of thy hand may bring forth music from our souls; and may the harmony in us be increased until thou canst bring from us the royalties of the heavenly chorus. And when at last, through darkness and trouble, and weariness and suffering, and the infinite inflections of weakness and wickedness, we have come to the end of our term of probation, open thou, O God, the door that we who have thought we lived may live indeed, and rise into thy presence, to be guided no more by types or shadows, but by thine own personal self.

And we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit. *Amen.*

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